

MINUTES

**McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission
1st Floor Community Development Conference Room
7447 E. Indian School Road, Scottsdale, Arizona
Thursday, December 4, 2003**

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Kovach called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m., noting the presence of a quorum.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Christine Kovach, Vice-Chair
Les Conklin
Denny Carr
Erik Filsinger
Laura Fisher
Arnold Roy
Solange Whitehead
Don Ruff

Absent: Art DeCabooter, Chairman
Howard Myers
Virginia Korte

Staff: Bob Cafarella
Don Meserve

Visitors: Carla

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Vice-Chair Kovach called attention to the following corrections:

Page 2. Paragraph 6, clarification as to “they”. Change to: Fountain Hills agreed with MCO and did not see an option. Page 3, paragraph 1, spelling error, trail. Clarification as to whether it is a Jeep trail or trail/road.

ON MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER RUFF AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER CARR, THE NOVEMBER 6, 2003 MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS CORRECTED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF 8-0.

STATUS OF FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Cafarella recalled that the Commission had forwarded a recommendation to City Council for a 0.4 percent (4/10 of one percent) increase in the sales tax to fund the remaining land in the Preserve and to provide funding for the access area amenities. He reported that City Council had discussed the recommendation at a study session, and that discussions were ongoing with a decision expected by City Council in mid-January. Mr. Cafarella recommended continued communication between the Commission and City Council in support of this issue.

SCENIC CORRIDORS

Vice-Chair Kovach stated that this agenda item would be moved to the January agenda due to Commissioner Myers' absence.

UPDATE: STATE TRUST LANDS WORKING GROUP

Carla, a member of the working group, distributed a copy of an Arizona Republic article from November 30, 2003 relating to the State Trust lands. She also provided a summary of the reform proposal dated November 20, 2003. She referred to Coalition Chair Ed Fox's statement that the "devil is in the details", and observed that any benefit to conservationists was contingent upon careful development of the details in the reform. Carla distributed and reviewed each of the elements of the proposed reform. She noted that the first bullet point was a huge step forward in that it would include a statement in the preamble to the Constitution that the goal is to obtain economic value for the Trust, while maximizing lands for natural open space. She explained that the second bullet point would keep the education communities at the table by ensuring that the appointment of four of the members of the seven member Board of Trustees would come from different aspects of the educational community.

Carla discussed the third bullet and noted its importance to the State Land Department as developing a process to make it self-sufficient. She pointed out that the fourth bullet point was sensitive to the developers and Arizona homebuilders in that it facilitates the disposal and planning for state lands ripe for development and tools for better planning. Carla pointed out that the reform would allow the State Land Department to authorize dedications for roads, trails, utility corridors etc. without having to go to public auction. She went on to review the aspects of the document that relate to rural areas and noted the power wielded in the Legislature by rural interests. She observed that there was a measure of conflict between rural interests and the conservation community and that certain groups might raise opposition to rural area elements of the plan. She explained the "incentive lands" and "option lands" classifications, and noted that the last bullet point referring to land exchanges could be problematic. She commented that land exchange has been on the ballot six times and rejected six times. Carla responded to Commissioner's questions and requested that the Commissioners refer questions from the public to her. She underscored the importance of accurate outreach due to the fragile position of the reform process at present.

HIDDEN HILLS UPDATE

Mr. Cafarella reported that the Hidden Hills trailhead improvements plan would be presented at a DRB meeting for approval in mid January or February, with construction hopefully to follow soon thereafter. He provided graphics of the upper lot for review by the Commission. Mr. Cafarella noted that the City had focused on sensitivity to the privacy needs of the residences closest to the trailhead, and noted that the parking spaces had been decreased from 30 to 22. He added that the City was comfortable with that number. Mr. Cafarella stated that planting fully grown trees and some additional berming was being done to minimize impact on adjacent residences. He went on to note the equestrian amenities in the lower lot. In response to questions by the Commissioners, Mr. Cafarella noted that the area would be for day use only and that work on the gate structure was ongoing relative to esthetics and ensuring egress only after dark.

Commissioner Carr inquired as to amenities for alternate transportation and also about coordination with a viable bike path to the area. Mr. Cafarella replied that there was a bike path along a portion of Via Linda and suggested that perhaps the issue could be addressed to the transportation staff. He concluded by reviewing the various amenities and access to be provided for alternate transportation users and equestrian users.

Commissioner Whitehead commended Mr. Cafarella and the City for an impressive job on this project.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM FOR PRESERVE

Mr. Cafarella reported that the Hidden Hills Trailhead Improvements and Trail Project had been funded and that efforts to plan the south access area were scheduled to commence in March or April 2004. He added that the south access project would include restrooms, perhaps a small amphitheater, and ramadas with interpretive displays. He noted that Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funding for the gateway at Thompson Peak Parkway and Bell Road would be pursued next.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Cafarella indicated that he had no additional report.

FUTURE EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER RUFF TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR JANUARY 8, 2004 FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PUBLIC BODY AND CONSULTATION WITH CITY ATTORNEY FOR LEGAL ADVICE TO CONSIDER ITS POSITION AND INSTRUCT ITS REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING NEGOTIATING FOR PURCHASE OR LEASE OF REAL PROPERTY FOR INCLUSION IN THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE, ARS38-431.03 (A) (3) AND (A) (7). THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CARR AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, 8-0.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commissioner Carr stated that he would like to have information on where the current trail system is and where it is headed. Commissioner Conklin advised the Commission that he was editor of the Peak Magazine, and that the theme for March would be support of the Preserve. He asked for input from the Commissioners.

Carla suggested extending an invitation to the Planning Committee members regarding discussions about trail use in and outside of the Preserve in order to include the people that worked hard preparing the trails plan. She asked the Commissioners to mark January 5 on their calendars for a KAET Horizon presentation on the Preserve. She also inquired as to the possibility of moving the April 1 meeting as it conflicted with the second annual Preservation Party at Taliesin West. Carla also urged the Commission to initiate work on a commercial permitting process for the Preserve, adding that Arizona Outback was already providing some services in the Preserve.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Commissioner Carr asked for a re-evaluation of the Preserve trail system, especially around Hidden Hill trailhead on the southeast side of the wash and some alternatives. A field trip for interested Commissioners was proposed to occur before this item is placed on the agenda.

Vice-Chair Kovach noted that the scenic corridors discussion was scheduled for the January meeting, and asked that the presentation regarding the Preserve Stewards take place at the February meeting.

Being duly moved and seconded, the regular meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

“For the Record” Reporters

12403min